



Love Really Does Exist



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Chapter 1 by Fanwizard

"He's dead, Caroline," Mother told me at the dinner table as she pushed a strand of her auburn hair out of her face.

"Who's dead?" I picked up the glass fork, preparing to start digging into the delicious meal our cook had cooked.

"Father is dead," Mother's lips trembled as she pushed her food around the plate. Her long curly auburn hair hid her face, but I knew she wasn't smiling.

"Daddy's dead?" I dropped the fork on the floor. "How?" A round tear sneaked out of my eyes and crept down my cheeks onto my white blouse.

"He died in sleep," Mother's whole body was shaking now. "You've known he was sick for a long time, and he was struggling and in so much pain, I thought we were lucky enough to have him around for so long. He put up a good fight."

"Tell me you are lying. Mother. Please tell me you are," I seized her hand, and pleaded, wishing, praying that the words that came out of her mother's mouth couldn't be true.

"I wish I could tell you I am kidding, Caroline. He's been sick for a long time with influenza, and your father was supposedly getting better, but then he slipped out of his body after that painful coma that started yesterday..." Mother trailed off.

"Daddy can't be dead. He can't!" I shook my head stubbornly while Mother hugged me tight in her arms.

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"He's gone, Caroline. The only thing I can do is tell you the truth. They did everything they could," Mother's voice cracked. "I wish I could tell you I am kidding, Caroline. He's been sick for a long time with influenza, and your father was supposedly getting better, but then he slipped out of his body after that painful coma that started yesterday..." Mother trailed off.

"May I be excused?" I asked.

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As soon as Mother nodded, I bolted out the mansion, and ran, feet slapping pavement.

WHAP!

WHAP!

I ran to Daddy's favorite tree, the crystal tree. As soon as I reached the tree, I wept throwing myself on the ground. My tears couldn't be stopped. Faster and faster they came. The rain must have sensed my mood, because it started pouring.

Luckily, the crystal tree protected me from all the rain, and our maid, Mary came with my coat and two umbrellas. Mary was sweet and pretty with dark straight hair regally twisted on her head, and warm dark blue eyes like Daddy. However, Mary looked grim and sad.

"Lady Caroline, Milady Sadie would like to call you in," Mary curtsied. "Would you like to come back in?"

Nodding my head, I slipped into my jacket, and wiped my puffy eyes. Then, I slowly stood up, and prepared for the slow walk home. "He's dead, Caroline," Mother told me at the dinner table as she pushed a strand of her auburn hair out of her face.

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Sunday was Daddy's funeral. As his body was lowered into the ground permanently, I held hands with Mother and Mary, wearing a silk black hair ribbon with a stiff black dress. I tried not to think about how Daddy would never be here with me again, how his soul was in heaven like Grandpa's. After the funeral, the house was quiet, with everyone too sad to speak. However, Grandma came over to visit. Her carriage was coming slowly across the dirt when I saw her. Grandma is seventy, which is an average age for a great grandmother, but she's like a second mother to me. Grandma came out wearing a long black dress, her auburn and gray hair braided back into a braid and pulled into a tight bun at the back of her head.

"Caroline, I heard what happened to your father. Oh, poor William," Grandma hugged me close, after I walked to greet her. "He was always a good hearted man that left so early."

"I miss Daddy already," I said blinking back tears, as I thought I smelled Daddy's scent, wood and peppermint.

"William was always a wonderful good man," Grandma said, pulling out of her embrace. She started walking towards the house. "How's your mother doing?"

"She's been moping around the house all day since the funeral," I replied as I started walking beside her.

"William's suffering from loss, I was the same when your grandpa died in the sinking of the Titanic! Grandma smoothed out my hair. "When did Grandpa die again?" I asked. I knew the date by heart but I urged to hear it once more.

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"You weren't even born yet. Fifteen years ago at the tender age of fifty five, he was traveling on the Titanic, and when it sunk, he saved fifty people. However, his fate was different," Grandma paused, looking at the horizon. "My young sweet George, gone so young. Married for thirty years, thirty years of joy. He always sacrificed so much for others, including his own life."

"Have you ever considered finding someone else?" I wondered out loud, wondering if my imagination had gone off the deep end again.

"Oh, everyone has one specific person in life. George was mine. Once the person is gone, life is lonely," Grandma's eyes were glistening with tears. "Life is lonely without company."

The rest of the walk was silent, and I caught myself glancing at Grandma, and seeing Grandma dab her eyes with her blue lace handkerchief.

Once we reached the house, Mother hugged Grandma. "He's gone, Mother. Sleeping forever."

"Shh, Sadie. It's all right. He's happy and will always be with us no matter what," Grandma soothed Mother tenderly.

"I loved him," Mother whispered. "We were married for only twenty-five years, and now he's gone for good."

"It's all right Sadie. You have photos and memories of him to embrace you forever. You'll find someone else in your lifetime. A lifetime has to end sometime," Grandma embraced Mother tenderly.

"He was too young to die, and he was mine. No one can ever replace him," Mother mumbled. Mother was silent for a long time, while she held back tears for twenty minutes. Finally she wiped her eyes and stood up, her mouth a firm line. "Let's go inside."

Let me just say, I admire my house. It's big, it's comfortable, and it's bright. I will save you from the pain of explaining everything.

Mother led Grandma to the fancy parlor while I climbed the three stories of spiraling stairs to my bedroom. Slowly opening the pure snow white door, I curled up into a tight ball on my neat, warm bed. Beside my bed, there was a white nightstand that held five different pictures of my family, especially Father. I heard Mother slowly climb the stairs, and heard her bedroom door open. Reaching over for any picture, thinking maybe I could throw on the ground, my hand touched Daddy's favorite picture. He was positioned staring at his favorite watch. He didn't die

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I peeked again, and I crawled quietly to the side of the bed. Mother still didn't notice me, and didn't hear the heavy rustle of my dress. She was bowed over the wedding picture of her and Daddy, the only one left. I knew it was the photo even before I saw it. It was old and becoming slightly brown on the edges after twenty years.

The photo was of young Mother only twenty-five holding hands with Daddy who was twenty-seven. Mother was in mid laugh when the photo was taken, in black and white. She wore a long white lace covered dress with a wide yellow sash at the waist like the traditional design. It had a generous train and had long silk sleeves that were covering most of the visible part of Mother's hands. Around her neck was a delicate and beautiful pearl necklace and on her ears were small pearl drop earrings. Her long auburn hair was piled on top of her head covered by a white veil. Daddy wore a black suit with a high collar and a lovely flower pinned to his jacket. He smiled widely, and he looked happy, joyful to be married to Sadie Ella Skylar Mills (now Brooks). But now he was gone, forever.

Mother murmured some words under her breath, but now I could hear what she was saying. A prayer.

"Dear God, please protect William. He was a good man. William will be greatly missed. I loved him and he was a lovely man to be married to. Amen," Mother said.

Then she began to cry delicately with small tears slipping down her face. After a few minutes of crying, she curled up on the side of the bed and slept.

I knew it was my time to get the watch. Tiptoeing, I held my breath and dared not to make a sound, for Mother would question me if she caught me red handed. I was not a good liar. Then I was at the bedside. Sure enough, Daddy's smooth watch was still there. I grabbed it, and hugged it close. Cold. Then I looked at Mother's sleeping form.

I could see all the pain she had gone through. She lost her father, her husband, her son was in war, and her oldest daughter was away, my sister. She looked younger, with her curly auburn hair nestled around her pale, smooth face. However, Mother didn't look happier.

Slowly, I almost touched her fair cheek, until she stirred. I pulled my hand away fast. Then quickly, I ran to my room, still clutching the watch close to my heart.

I have an older sister, and her name is Lillian Charlotte Brooks, but we call her Lilly for short.

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I was rocking on my bed when I heard a knock at the door. Climbing down three stories worth of stairs, I opened the door, and saw Lilly! She was wearing a dark black dress that had black lace covering the sleeves and collar elegantly, and had pinned her dark curls under a black hat with a veil. Lilly looked tired even though her face was hidden mostly under the veil. She smiled the saddest smile I've ever seen when she saw me.

"Hi Carol. I've missed you," Lilly hugged me, and I smelled lilacs and jasmine. "Sorry I had to miss the funeral. My car couldn't get here fast enough. I didn't bring Sophie, because I thought she was too young to go to a funeral."

Lilly has a beautiful black automobile which is really fun to ride in. It's amazing, and she sometimes takes me out for a ride, just her and me.

"I missed you too," I said as I hugged her tight, breathing in her familiar scent, fresh as the flowers.

"Here's a gift," Lilly took out a large box, from behind her, and I opened it excitedly. Out came a beautiful, colorful flowery hat with a veil that was decorated with flowers to spell my name, Caroline.

"Thanks Lilly," I hugged her again, and placed the hat on my head. It was the first time that day that I smiled.

"Don't thank me, thank Sophie. Sophie reminded me to choose out the hat as a present for you. It's the latest fashion all the girls love," Lilly let me go out of the embrace and stepped inside. For the slightest second, I could have sworn I saw a sad look on her face. But as soon as it came, it was gone.

"So, how's school?" Lilly started walking. I attend private school for young women, that Mother paid for every year.

"Okay, I guess. I've learned a lot this year," I walked with her and lifted up one of her large bags. Lilly started up the stairs dragging her bags. I tried to pick up one of the bags but it was heavier than it looked.

As I struggled to lift the gift, Mary came over and asked, "Miss, do you need help with that?" I nodded and Mary easily took the bag over her shoulder and walked to Lilly. "Milady, I will take the luggage up later. You go get something to eat."

As I went up the stairs, Lilly gave up and pulled down. As we walked to the kitchen, there was a fresh batch of chocolate chip cookies. A bowl of milk set out just waiting to be eaten.

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"Oh you know. Peaceful, calm, maybe even boring," Lilly said this so casually that I thought that she might be talking about the weather.

"Why isn't John here?" I asked as I bit into a warm delicious chocolate cookie. It burns my tongue, but I like it.

"He's busy, and is staying home with Sophie along with all the other servants," Lilly twirled her black hair around her finger casually. "Where's Mother?"

"She's been moping around since the funeral," I bit into another soft delicious cookie and Grandma came over.

"Lilly!" Grandma mustered a smile when she saw Lilly. "How are you?"

"Grandma! You look spiffy Grandma, just plain spiffy." Lilly hugged Grandma tight, closing her eyes.

"How's Sophie?" Grandma asked as she pulled away, pushing Lilly's curls away from her face. Lilly's face immediately changed, and she looked sad. "Sophie, she's been sick for a long time. She's been burning with fever and been so weak and pale, I'm worried."

Grandma hugged her. "She'll be daisy picking fine in a few days, I'm sure of it. So John is looking after her, right?"

"John and I am thinking about getting a divorce. I'm keeping Sophie, the house, the furniture, everything," Lilly murmured into Grandma's hair.

When Grandma showed surprise and so did I, Lilly explained. "I know it's unladylike, but I paid for everything I own. John and I agreed that I would have custody of Sophie. He's found love with someone else."

"So you're getting divorced?" Grandma started making a hot cup of tea. She drank tea when she was nervous.

"Yes, and I'm moving. I bought the house, and now I'm selling it. I hated that house, but it could buy Sophie enough medicine to cure her," Lilly sipped her cup of milk.

Just that moment, Mother came slouching downstairs. I've never seen her like that. Slouching, messy hair, and sooner or later, she was going to discover that watch was missing and maybe spank me. Her face changed when she saw her oldest daughter, a smile so sad it didn't help much. The smile broke my heart.

"Lilly!" Mother hugged Lilly tight. "I'm so proud of you. I see you're in. So you're getting divorced?"

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came out, a loose matching silky white one that was decorated with pearls. A wrap like a large white peacock that was furry and soft came out of the box.

"Oh, Lilly, it's lovely," Mother gasped as she ran her fingers through her messy bed head. Then she bit her lip.

"It's what every woman loves to wear for an evening gown," Lilly beamed as she smiled brighter.

"I can't possibly take this," Mother insisted, running her fingers over the large smooth pearls.

"Yes, you can," Lilly insisted. "It's a gift to cheer you up. I picked it up a few miles away from her."

Mother ran her fingers through her bed head again, and smoothed out her curls as best as she could while blushing, and smiling for the first time that day.

Lilly announced later that she was going to stay for a week, and would be staying in the guest room right across the hall from me. That would be fine with me. After Mother tried on the dress, Lilly insisted on brushing Mother's curls to look more presentable. Then, she swirled Mother's hair on top of her head regally. I was watched, amazed by my sister Lilly's talent for fashion. However, I still was wondering if Mother discovered the stolen watch, the last possession of my daddy's that would always remind me of him, due to the fact that I was not going to carry around a giant coat of his which Mother would sure notice. Lilly noticed my look of amazement, and asked if she wanted me to do my hair. I nodded shyly, and she removed my bobby pins, hat, and my hair ribbon

My hair is awful. It's all puffy and wispy in some parts while it is thick in others. It's stringy, no matter how much I brush it. However the color is decent, an auburn color that shines when it is at its best. Mary said my hair was lovely, curly, and wavy at the exact same time as she described it, but I think it looks like I forgot to comb my hair for a few days and several days of bed head. Lilly brushed and twisted in a way that felt comfortable yet painful at the exact same time, until she said, "Done."

I looked in my hand mirror. The girl in the mirror looked strong and regal with her hair twisted so elegantly that it revealed her slender, beautiful heart shaped face perfectly along with those large sky blue eyes. I admired it, and Lilly smiled again. The house seemed happy, even though all of us were thinking about Daddy, sitting alone and cold in his grave, or maybe right beside me at this exact moment. I missed smelling his fresh wood and peppermint smell.

Two days ago, my daddy was in the hospital. He was so weak, and he was so tired. He wished he could die. His wish

was granted, and now he was lying in the ground. I was so sad. I was thinking about Sophie. Sophie is a very adorable girl with blonde hair and blue eyes. She has a tiny button nose, and an adorable smile. She has a bunch of long dark curls and freckles on her skin. Sophie looks like she could be a newborn even though she is really one. Sophie met Daddy a few times when she was

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really little, but I doubt she remembered him. However, I think she remembered me, because Lilly mimicked Sophie at the table.

“However, she’s so weak now every morning, she just says, ‘Carol?’” Lilly shook her head. I was thinking of Daddy right then. I remembered his thick black eyebrows like caterpillars crawling across his face. With his sparkling baby blue eyes that twinkled when he laughed or smiled. Also his thick hair that was silky under the touch. He didn’t seem that close to dying three days ago.

I remembered holding his hand as he said those last words, his face pale and worn under those blankets. Mother escorted me out of Daddy’s room, and told me, “Daddy will get better. He just needs rest.”

I had went to my room that night and took a hot bath. Then, I had prayed that Daddy would get better.

My prayer was wrong.

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